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# OCCASIONAL PAPERS

## AN INTRODUCTION TO WORLD ISLAMIC CONFERENCES

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**The Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies** is, with the Department for Middle Eastern and African History, a part of the School of History at Tel Aviv University. Its main purpose is to contribute, by research and documentation, to the expansion of knowledge and understanding of the modern history and current affairs of the Middle East and Africa. Emphasis is laid on fields where Israeli scholarship is in a position to make a special contribution and on subjects relevant to the needs of society and the teaching requirements of the University.

#### OCCASIONAL PAPERS

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Mr. Martin Kramer is a graduate student at Princeton University. He has recently spent a period of research work at the Shiloah Center. For the purpose of the present study, he has made use, alongside many other sources, of the Center's documentation facilities. We welcome the opportunity of including his study in the Center's series of Occasional Papers.

If a single word would faithfully depict modern Islamic institutional history, the choice would probably fall upon 'decline'. This is unmistakably the theme of the most important collection of essays on Islamic institutions from 1500;<sup>1</sup> there and elsewhere, the abasement of the ʿulamāʾ, the corruption and confiscation of awqāf, the utter collapse of the caliphate, and the deterioration of madrasa, zāwiya, and mosque, repeatedly emerge as major themes. Even the ṭarīqa and mawlid, once the most popular manifestations of Islamic belief, witnessed a documented degeneration. These portrayals gave the vivid impression that religion was a spent force in those parts of Africa and Asia that scholars of an earlier generation once confidently called 'the Islamic world'.

But Islam, once the fugitive, has returned, so we are told. An increasing number of reliable commentators, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, have detected a vital and active religious movement underneath the surface of apparent institutional decline.<sup>2</sup> The notion has gained currency that this movement is both recent, and centered about the secret or conspiratorial society often committed to violent means. Both of these impressions of the Islamic 'revival' are distorted, for they mistake the shifting (if not cyclic) emphases of scholarly interpretation for undulations of far more constant religious faith.

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I should like to record my gratitude to the Shiloah Center, which provided a most agreeable climate for pursuit of the initial stages of this research. My thanks are especially due to Professors Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked, for their sustained interest, patience, and expressions of confidence. I should also like to acknowledge the generous assistance provided me by Princeton University's Program in Near Eastern Studies, without which I could not have availed myself of an exceptionally rewarding summer association with the Shiloah Center.



In fact, the notion of 'revival' ignores continuous decades of less sensational but uninterrupted Islamic activism. To borrow the words of Charles Frankel written in a different context: "Intellectuals, in relation to society and politics, have a notable capacity to delay the recognition of the obvious, and when they get around to recognizing it, they tend to convert their moment of illumination into a new Copernican Revolution." <sup>3</sup> Such has been the recent, belated recognition of Islam's vitality.

There has existed, in fact, one form of overt Islamic activity and institutional growth that has continued almost unabated for some fifty years, closely corresponding in time to the supposed ascent of secularism: world Islamic conferences and the organizations that have promoted them. Their activities perhaps confirm that, for not a few Muslims, religious commitment and its visible public manifestations never faded. <sup>4</sup>

The story of world Islamic conferences is one of phenomenal growth, all the more paradoxical in light of the apparent decline of other institutions. For a half-century, Islamic conferences have gathered religious scholars and activists; for almost a decade, they have been convened at the summit and foreign ministerial levels. Along with the Muslim club, society, and cultural or benevolent association, the Islamic conference has compensated for the suppression of long-established Islamic institutions, and has thrived thanks to that religious fervor and commitment today sealed off from traditional channels of expression.

The proliferation of these conferences has been so rapid and disorderly that familiarity with their function and appreciation of their significance are exceedingly rare outside of the Islamic world. Particularly striking is the realization that most members of the scholarly community who are professionally engaged in the study of Islamic religion and institutions are totally unacquainted in the history and

recent expansion of world Islamic conferences and organizations. This brief study is a rudimentary attempt to end that deficiency by providing an interpretative outline of the emergence and growth of these neglected forums for the meeting of Muslim minds.

### I. Precedents

Islam, runs a time-worn dictum, admits neither synod nor ecclesiastical council. Like authoritative papacy and hierarchical clergy, the highly organized religious assemblies which enjoyed so central a role in the history of Christianity had no readily analogous parallel in Islamic history; and there was much in Islamic tradition which actively discouraged the rise of comparable institutions. "He who imitates others, belongs not to us; imitate neither the Jews nor the Christians," the Prophet Muhammad is said to have enjoined.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the nearest Islamic approximation to the synod or council -- for those drawn to comparison -- was the doctrine of ijmā'<sup>c</sup> according to which the Islamic community was collectively preserved from error in fundamental matters of faith. But as Ignaz Goldziher emphasized, the resemblance was difficult to discern at best:

The role of dogma in Islam cannot be compared with that which it plays in the religious life of any of the Christian Churches. There are no Councils and Synods which, after lively controversy, lay down the formulae, which henceforth shall be deemed to embrace the whole of the true faith. There is no ecclesiastical institution, which serves as the measure of orthodoxy, no single authorized interpretation of the holy scriptures, on which the doctrine and exegesis of the Church might be built. The consensus, the supreme authority in all questions of religious practice, exercises an elastic, in a certain sense barely definable jurisdiction... What is accepted as Consensus by one party, is far from being accepted as such by another.<sup>6</sup>

Ijmā'<sup>c</sup> appeared disorganized not merely in comparison with vaguely kindred Christian practice; its lack of practicality provoked autonomous

Muslim criticism. Said ash-Shāfi<sup>C</sup>ī of the Medinese consensus:

I wish I knew who they are whose opinions constitute consensus, of whom one hears nothing and whom we do not know, Allah help us! Allah has obliged no man to take his religion from persons whom he knows. Even if Allah had done so, how would this justify taking one's religion from persons unknown? <sup>7</sup>

Here one finds summarized the fundamental impediment to an ijmā<sup>C</sup> institutionalized within a kind of organized forum: beyond the basic affirmation of Muslim faith in the unity of God and the mission of His Prophet, belief was a matter of personal discretion. The Islamic community, despite sporadic persecutions of 'heretics', tolerated a broad diffusion of religious prestige among ashrāf, ulamā<sup>C</sup>, Sufi shaykhs, saints, marabouts, mahdis and walis. An authoritatively 'orthodox' synod, similar in intent to al-Ma'mūn's futile policy of an imposed Mu<sup>C</sup>tazila, would have been widely repudiated as yet one more form of tyranny.

In view of this heritage, so inimical to any attempt at centralization of religious authority, the convocation of the first world Islamic conferences (mu'tamarāt) over half a century ago was an extraordinary development. A Transjordanian alim<sup>C</sup> at that time still might have said of the conciliar idea that it was an "innovation unheard of in the annals of Islam," asking: "If a single precedent for it is known, how comes it that no one up to the present day has either remembered or thought of advancing it?" <sup>8</sup> But as various gatherings bearing the designation of Islamic conferences became recurrent and acclaimed events, believers did not hesitate to cite among their precedents even the practice of Muḥammad. <sup>9</sup> Muslim rulers and scholars, even those of the most conservative dispositions, had wholeheartedly engaged an innovative institution in the service of Islam, retroactively according it an esteemed place in the Prophetic tradition. The germ of this remarkable transformation must be sought in that series of severe



dislocations which convulsed the Islamic world during the later expansion of Europe.

## II. A Propitious Setting

It is hoped that the ample narrative on the theme of the nineteenth-century 'impact of the West' absolve us from redundant repetitions here. The story of successive outside encroachments against the territorial possessions of Islamic states is a familiar one; so is the concomitant decay of Muslim confidence into tortured self-reproach or defensive self-adulation. After a lengthy interim, the intellectual marketplace had become reanimated; The then au courant political heresies of Europe swept the Islamic lands like so many epidemics, attracting both the thoughtfully sincere and the itinerant vendors of ideologies and schemes.

"Adversity reminds men of religion," wrote Livy. In this setting of rapid retreat emerged what became known to Western authors as Pan-Islamism (ittihād-i Islām). The sustaining notion behind this doctrine held that Muslims, through their own discord, divisiveness, and disbelief, had weakened the Islamic polity and invited foreign domination. But deliverance from hateful foreign intrusions could yet be achieved by strengthening the bonds of affinity between Muslims everywhere. "And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate," admonishes the Qur'ān.<sup>10</sup> Hamidian propagandists and figures like Namik Kemal and Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī popularized an expanding pan-Islamic sentiment which Islamic conferences were initially to serve.<sup>11</sup>

But the intensified movement for Islamic unity was not alone sufficient to engineer the first Islamic conferences. Like all modern forms of international organization and association, Islamic conferences

owed their feasibility to the spread of sophisticated means of transportation and communications; the logistical barriers dividing Muslims were rapidly dismantled during the course of the nineteenth century. It is often forgotten that, just as Western technological advances in these fields accelerated the Muslim 'discovery of Europe', they equally brought to widely scattered Muslim communities a more informed and often even revolutionary awareness of one another. Muslim journals began to fill with accounts of Muslim life in hitherto remote reaches, and first-hand familiarity with conditions of Muslims elsewhere was no longer the exclusive preserve of the persevering traveller-geographers. Rashīd Riḍā attested to the impact of these new advances which had made the regular gathering of recognized mujtahids from near and far, for the formulation of ijmāʿ, a task of remarkable ease. In his opinion, this would have been quite impossible at the time of Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, ash-Shāfiʿī, Ibn Ḥanbal, and their successors.<sup>12</sup>

Concurrent with rapid European progress in the fields of transportation and communications was the 'organizational revolution' which distinguished the nineteenth century. This was the era of the first steps towards institutionalized multilateral diplomacy represented by the Congress of Vienna, the Concert of Europe, the Hague System, and the first international agencies. Just as many Muslims were drawn to emulate Western parliamentary institutions, considered the secret of Western progress in all other fields, so others saw in European international organizations a source of power worthy of imitation. From the early European forums emerged the structural outline of most modern international organizations: the permanent secretariats and select councils that handled affairs between convocation of general conferences, which in turn determined policy guidelines through resolutions and recommendations. This modus operandi was later to be adopted in its entirety by Islamic conferences, Arab congresses, and a host of fledgling assemblies throughout Asia and Africa.



A unifying cause, technological means, and a functioning model: these were the contributions of an expanding Europe to the germination of various proposals and schemes for the formal organization of the Islamic world. The final contribution, that of initiative, was of Muslim provenance: men of ideals and men of ambition were to exploit these favorable circumstances in pursuit of their innovative institutional visions.

The prerogative of initiative was, at least at the start, as elusive as in the days when ash-Shāfi<sup>C</sup>ī made his complaint regarding the Medinese consensus. H.A.R. Gibb wrote:

Who is in a position to summon such a congress, who appoints the delegates, and whom do they represent? There seems, from our point of view, to be a lack of method about them...The answer is not easy to make clear to those who have not grasped the flexible and voluntary nature of Moslem institutions. Underlying the whole system is, in brief, public opinion. Not everyone may convene a congress, but only those whom public opinion (as guided by its leaders and creators) recognizes to hold a position of natural leadership. The same applies to the 'delegates' and members. Each of them is known, the extent of his influence is known, his political position is known. <sup>13</sup>

The observation is fundamentally sound, although one may well challenge the suitability of the notion of a 'public opinion' supportive of a 'natural leadership'. Among the Hezār Sokhan of Muḥammad Ḥijāzī there is one that reads: "Public opinion is the opinion of the one or a few for which the public is held responsible." True to this adage, initiation of a conference has never required any great populist groundswell, and the privilege to do so has been most often self-conferred. Still, the eligible circles for this role of leadership are broadly definable by categories, each possessing a degree of elusive legitimacy to which Gibb alluded.

Among the initiators and participants one finds both established 'Culamā' and those self-made Muslim activists who directed the network of local religious clubs, societies and organizations that first emerged during the late nineteenth century. Usually under the sway of Islamic reformist and Salafi tenets, most of these individuals shared that hallmark of the reformist temperament; an overwhelming distaste for variance within the one true faith.

Their pan-Islamic vision was inseparable from their belief that a purified Islam demanded both greater conformity with a recognized norm, and centralization of religious authority to determine that norm. Islamic conferences were a means to that end; to the 'Culamā' and activists of a Salafi bent, Islamic conferences owed their reformist and Sunni majoritarian stamp. But beyond this commitment to principle, 'Culamā' had another no less compelling reason to initiate and promote Islamic conferences. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a well-documented and relentless erosion of the socio-political position of 'Culamā': their financial endowments were compromised or confiscated, their legal role was usurped by civil codes, and their educational mission was attenuated by the spread of secular schools. The headlines which Islamic conferences were to earn rapidly became a form of compensation for lost eminence, representing one last opportunity to perform a politically and socially utilitarian task. This may partly explain the paradox of the rapid rise of Islamic conferences during an era of precipitous decline for almost every other institution connected with the 'Culamā'.

But this paradox may equally be attributed to the keen interest taken by Muslim heads of state in Islamic conferences. The debasement of the Ottoman caliphate, itself the fiction of a declining empire, opened the swelling floodgates of personal ambition for other would-be pretenders to a coveted title. When the vacant caliphate ceased to serve as the focal point for these rivalries, the political struggle for positions of leader-

ship and supremacy in the Islamic world found other expressions. But in all of these conflicts, governmental patronage of Islamic conferences conferred greater or lesser political advantages upon the patrons themselves. Many of the same rulers who seized religious endowments, confined the ʿulamāʾ to a much reduced niche in society, or were otherwise indifferent to religion, doubled as avid promoters of Islamic conferences. One might anticipate our account and note here that the Islamic appeal eventually proved so potent that governments were no longer content to sponsor conferences of religious figures and activists: over the last decade, they have bestowed upon a series of their own international diplomatic gatherings, devoid of strictly religious content, the nominal designation of 'Islamic' conferences.

### III. Proposals

Circumstances had thus become favorable during the nineteenth century for the first steps towards international Islamic organization; as initiative combined with motive and means, the first proposals for Islamic conferences were circulated. But to trace the precise ancestry of these proposals is a singularly unrewarding task: ideas were ceaselessly imported, then liberally 'borrowed', so that their provenance has been totally obscured. Not surprisingly, the Muslim origins of the conference idea are shrouded in a near-impenetrable haze of suspect claims.<sup>14</sup>

The concept is most frequently attributed to those wellsprings of pan-Islamic plans and intrigues, Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduḥ; it was Rashīd Riḍā who insisted that these two generated the idea on the pages of al-ʿUrwa al-wuthqā in 1884.<sup>15</sup> But the passages cited from the paper by Riḍā are so vague that they hardly constitute a serious proposal. It is far more likely that the citations were but an expression of an already widespread idea, sufficiently derivative



that creative genius need not be sought to explain its appearance.

In fact, the end of the nineteenth century witnessed a sudden proliferation of world conference designs, most of which proposed to assemble <sup>C</sup>ulamā'. Rumors circulated about potential Islamic gatherings under Ottoman auspices in Constantinople, <sup>16</sup> as well as under French sponsorship in Paris; <sup>17</sup> al-Manār set forth a more detailed proposal for a world gathering in Mecca, <sup>18</sup> and <sup>C</sup>Abd ar-Rahmān al-Kawākibī's fictional Umm al-Qurā, a purported account of a secretly-convened Islamic conference but in fact an anti-Ottoman tract,, gained widespread circulation. <sup>19</sup> The most actively pursued of the early proposals was the one advanced from 1907 by the noted Tatar jadīdist, Ismail Gasprinskii. a committee of notables in Cairo undertook to promote his conference, 'statutes' were published, and dates for the convocation were set. <sup>20</sup> But like its predecessors, this initiative came to nought. To explain the conspicuous and uniform failure of world conference proposals to attain fulfillment for some forty years after the admonitions of al-<sup>C</sup>Urwa al-wuthqā, one must turn to Ottoman policy.

It is truly remarkable that neither Abdulhamit nor the Young Turks ever vigorously pursued the convening of an Islamic conference in support of their pan-Islamic policies. Perhaps having invested heavily in the worldwide promotion of Ottoman caliphal claims, they were now loath to see that prestige diffused or superseded by an unpredictable assembly of distinguished and resolute Muslims, some from beyond their own realm. They regarded outside initiatives with even more apprehension, discerning in them so many sinister stratagems designed to discredit Ottoman claims to more traditional religious authority. The Ottoman government may well have detected in the imaginary conference of Jam<sup>C</sup>iat Umm al-Qurā, a plot to be suppressed, <sup>21</sup> and the decisive opposition of Abdulaziz, and later of the C.U.P., to Gasprinskii's 22 initiative was common knowledge, candidly admitted by Gasprinskii himself.

To the late Ottomans, inspired by visions of self-aggrandizement, an authoritative caliphate simply could not coexist with Islamic conferences. It was a testament to the tenacious religious magnetism of the Ottoman Empire that no world Islamic conference was ever convened while the Ottoman caliphate retained even a shred of vitality. This coincidence is telling evidence in support of the theory that Islamic conferences, following so closely upon the demise of the Ottoman caliphate were in fact surrogate institutions for that caliphate.

#### IV. Breakthrough

It was only after the venerable caliphal institution succumbed to the neglect of irreverent Young Turks and the revolutionary zeal of Kemalists that conference proposals were successfully resuscitated. The act of the Grand National Assembly of 3 March 1924, by which the caliphate was finally abolished, had two principal effects. The decision precipitated a worldwide crisis of conscience among Culamā' and religious activists over the nature and future of the institution, and it exacerbated the scramble for the coveted title already underway among Muslim potentates. The initial call for an Islamic reunion after the abolition ironically appeared in a far too belated appeal issued from Switzerland by the deposed caliph Abdulmecit; <sup>23</sup> other initiatives soon followed. The consternation of the faithful and the ambitions of rulers then converged in the first world Islamic conferences.

Historians have conventionally regarded the Cairo caliphate congress and the Meccan conference on the status of the Holy Cities -- both held in 1926 -- as the first Islamic conferences to represent 'universal' constituencies. But conference organizers invariably depicted their gatherings as unprecedented 'firsts' whenever the claim could be put forth without doing obvious violence to well known historical fact. And indeed it would appear that the first world Islamic conference was held not in

1926, but at Mecca in 1924 in support of the short-lived Hashemite caliphate of King Husayn.

There had been early speculation that Husayn would use such a conference to support his caliphal claim.<sup>24</sup> After he accepted the bay'at from Iraqi, Hijazi, and Transjordanian dignitaries at ash-Shūna, he convened a mu'tamar al-ḥājj, attended by Muslim personages of many nationalities.<sup>25</sup> this was in fact a Muslim reincarnation of the mu'tamar jazīrat al-ʿArab, already held once under Husayn's auspices.<sup>26</sup> Fate was unkind to this less than auspicious beginning: Mecca fell to the Wahhābīs a few months later, Husayn abdicated, and the conference was never convened. Having ended his career as one of history's discards, Husayn was never accorded the recognition of having convened the first conference to exhibit universal pretensions. The Wahhābīs quite naturally referred to their own 1926 Meccan gathering as the 'first' Islamic conference, and subsequent historians failed to inquire further.

The conferences which followed Husayn's neglected enterprise are far better known and documented although their achievements were no more enduring. Three major conferences, assembling various ʿulamā' and notables, were held between 1926 and 1931: the Cairo Caliphate Congress (1926), the Meccan Islamic Conference (1926), and the General Islamic Conference in Jerusalem (1931). Their greater fame was due perhaps more to the attendance of illustrious conferees than to concrete achievements: gathering of figures such as Rashīd Ridā, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ath-Thaʿālibī, Amīn al-Husaynī, Shawkat and Muḥammad ʿAlī, and Muḥammad Iqbāl, could not fail to excite the imaginations of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

But the conference initiators did not intend simply to gather celebrities under one roof, and it is to those attempts to achieve concrete results that one must turn. While in many ways the three gatherings rivaled one another, they were comparable in most essentials.



Each was assembled in order to deal with a single topic, some question of pressing and sincere concern among Muslims everywhere. The Cairo conference was convened to resolve or at least to clarify the caliphate question; the Meccan conference, to normalize the pilgrimage and the administration of the Holy Cities in the wake of the Wahhābī occupation; and the Jerusalem conference, to counter Zionist advances in Palestine. Each became intertwined with the political designs of rulers or potential rulers: the Cairo conference was identified -- although not avowedly -- with the caliphal claims of King Fu'ād; the Meccan conference, with the territorial ambitions of Ibn Sa'ūd; and the Jerusalem conference, with the interests of Amīn al-Ḥusaynī and the entanglements of Palestine Arab politics.

But above all, each was the first and last of its line: despite intentions to the contrary, none were ever reconvened, and whatever momentum was generated was insufficient to sustain permanent organizations. The energetic vigor surrounding the first conferences yielded to a period of prolonged inactivity that lasted well past the end of the second World War. Had these conferences failed? How must the idle interval be interpreted?

Early world Islamic conferences were assuredly a source of disillusionment for both their idealistic and opportunistic enthusiasts. The press was harsh in its assessments, the public was preoccupied and indifferent. But disappointment was invariably the meager harvest of exaggerated expectations. The goals set by conference organizers were overly ambitious and seemingly determined with but slight regard for current political realities. The organizers of the Cairo conference, for example, intended at first to undertake the insurmountable task of designating a new caliph; they later limited the conference's scope to the issuing of definitive declarations on the nature of the caliphate; but the gathering ended by deferring the most important question on its agenda to discussion at an undetermined later date. The issues raised then remain in abeyance to this day.

The selection of representatives was often no more reasoned than the formulation of agendas. Invitation of delegates was frequently haphazard and constituencies were ill-defined, casting doubts on the very validity of conference resolutions, arrived at by ambiguous consensus. The Meccan conference suffered from just such representational chaos. Ibn Sa'ūd originally invited Muslim rulers to Mecca, but such a 'summit' quickly became impractical due to political considerations and mutual jealousies. This reversal was countered by assembling not rulers, but dignitaries and notables of widely diverse rank and indeterminate authority.

A saying derived from a Qur'ānic verse often cited in support of the conference idea runs amrudum shūrā baynahum (their affairs are settled by mutual consultation), but has been modified in a sardonic derivative to amruhum fawdā baynahum (their affairs are chaotic among them). The early conferences were much more akin to the latter formulation. Historical perspective nevertheless discerns in these shortcomings not so many indicators of failure, but reverses common to most international organizations in primary stages of development. These were rudimentary conferences: in anticipating enduring consequences from these few days of inexperienced exchange, conference sponsors and later scholars overlooked the weighty evidence of historical precedent. There are no peoples or nations, east or west, with well established traditions of universal cooperation and international solidarity, and initial setbacks were once quite common to attempts at collective international action. In a detached assessment of the early conferences, one can only point to the yardstick of educated expectations advocated much more forcefully elsewhere. <sup>28</sup>

The idle sequel of over a decade is more revealing. The ensuing hiatus was perhaps attributable in part to the rise in popularity of those secular ideologies during the 1930s and 1940s, which endorsed themes other than Islam to promote the unity of diverse peoples. Arabism

comes most readily in mind. The war and its prelude further curbed all overt political activities among Muslim peoples. The only significant Islamic conference held during the period was convened in neutral Geneva, far from the restrictions imposed upon political activity in the Islamic East.<sup>29</sup> But again, the initial failure to reconvene the conferences is a phenomenon with which every student of international organization is well acquainted, and is so recurrent a feature that detailed interpretations seem redundant. The notion of gathering not merely when the need arises, but on a regular routine basis, was an advanced concept which required continuous commitment and institutional stability. Activist initiative and interest of governments was simply not sustained amid the disillusionment of the early conferences.

For the first attempts had gained notoriety even among Muslims; each was regarded -- fairly or not -- as yet another misadventure wherein the shallow naïveté of the many combined with the voracious greed of the few to yield little if anything of value. In a critical review of the early Islamic conferences, an Iraqi editorialist once opined:

When the day comes that the history of those Islamic conferences is written, conferences which drew no strength and example of action and sacrifice from Islam, an enormous responsibility will be found resting on the shoulders of those who sought to do huckstering and even gambling with the serene teachings and original precepts of Islam.<sup>30</sup>

#### V. Revival

During the late 1940s and the 1950s, the 'organizational revolution' was engaged anew by the victorious Allies with a crusading vigor, motivated by somber retrospections of the cause of the just-concluded World War. The creation of the United Nations and its agencies ushered in a new era of organizational expansion. Once again, the non-Western world drew upon



imported precedent: from this inspiration issued forth the Alexandria Protocol that established the Arab League, the Bandung conference of Afro-Asian states, and a host of lesser initiatives.

Among the seemingly less memorable of these enterprises were a half-dozen new Islamic organizations which began to summon conferences of ʿulamāʾ, notables of various sorts, activists, and minor government officials. Unlike their predecessors, nearly all of these organizations began to operate on a permanent basis, establishing standing secretariats and convening international Islamic conferences periodically. At the same time, the substantive issues discussed at the revived conferences differed markedly from the concerns of earlier gatherings. Meeting routinely, the conferees could no longer restrict themselves to discussion of one or two issues as they had done in the past. Instead, the new organizations passed resolutions -- still by consensus -- on a wide range of political issues and even pronounced judgment upon questions of Islamic religious practice. The supplanting of sporadic gatherings by periodic assemblies, of ad hoc committees by standing institutions, of narrow agendas by broad mandates, represents a turning point in the history of any international forum and an achievement that requires the continuous commitment of a constituency, a conscientious leadership, and uninterrupted funding. In a part of the world where voluntary associations are so often undisciplined or regarded as suspect, who but the state was in a position to provide for some, if not all, of these needs?

The key to this revival is thus to be found in the renewed interest of the state, or rather several states, in mobilizing popular religious conviction behind less popular regimes or official policies. And as each regime pursued an independent course, so the conference organizations began to proliferate under their many patrons, in a spirit of rivalry rather than collaboration. Organized Islam was reconstituted, but in a form dictated by particularistic national interests and fragmented along the lines of interstate conflict.

Four Islamic states vied for post-war preeminence through the creation of non-governmental world Islamic organizations: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Indonesia. These forums were still confined to the gathering of notables, activists, and <sup>C</sup>ulamā' -- the modern ahl al-ḥall wa'l-<sup>C</sup>aqd. But they had wider political implications.

Through sponsorship of Islamic conferences, Pakistan attempted to bring the weight of the entire Islamic world to bear against rival India in the subcontinent's labyrinth of territorial disputes; Saudi Arabia and Egypt sought to promote their own internecine political struggle, their 'Arab cold war'; and Indonesia supported its bid for leadership of the newly emergent Afro-Asian bloc. To achieve these ends, each of the 'independent' organizations created under the auspices of these four states claimed some sort of universal competence and jurisdiction -- not unlike the political programs of their official hosts. The competition for the allegiance of believers seeking guidance was often fierce.

\* \* \* \* \*

World Muslim Congress (Karachi). Pakistan was the scene of these first neo-pan Islamic enterprises. A shaykh al-Azhar once dryly noted that Pakistan had become the venue of too many Islamic conferences; most came to nought. Only one organization proved sufficiently durable: the World Muslim Congress (Mu'tamar al-<sup>C</sup>Ālam al-Islāmī), which has enjoyed an unprecedented three decades of operation. There have nonetheless been vicissitudes and setbacks: shortly after the organization was instituted, the growing friendship of Jamāl <sup>C</sup>Abd an-Nāṣir and Nehru led to a general disillusionment in Pakistan with practical designs for Islamic solidarity. The Congress, apparently lacking means, all but folded between 1952 and 1962. Only when Iraq's General <sup>C</sup>Abd al-Karīm Qāsim took an interest in the utilitarian aspects of the Islamic appeal were the

funds forthcoming for a new beginning;<sup>31</sup> and due to the lack of sustained support within Pakistan, the Congress has been convened wherever governments have been more congenial and forthcoming with finances.

The Congress's titular leader for many years was Amīn al-Husaynī, who enjoyed widespread prestige in his later years as a venerable mujāhid. His mere physical presence was intended to evoke a sense of continuity with the very first Islamic conferences. But the driving force has been In'āmullāh Khān, the organization's Secretary-General, who, by virtue of his long tenure, has inherited that prestige with Amīn al-Husaynī's passing. Under his guidance, deliberations have usually reflected the reconstructionist fundamentalism which serves as Pakistan's guiding ideology, and which has gained advocates throughout the Islamic world who regard Pakistan as a model worthy of emulation. Once the Congress portrayed itself as "the first representative international forum of the world of Islam";<sup>32</sup> but other claimants to the distinction were soon to appear. When better endowed organizations were established elsewhere, the Congress ceased to convene world gatherings and began to concentrate its efforts in publicist activities. The last major gathering under Congress auspices was held in 1967.

World Muslim League (Mecca). Like the Pakistani government, the Saudi monarchy sought to project itself beyond national borders by means of an Islamic appeal. The chief Saudi instrument in the worldwide promotion of Saudi fundamentalist perspectives on Islam was and remains the World Muslim League (Rābitat al-<sup>C</sup>Ālam al-Islāmī). Created in 1962 with government funds, the League receives sustained and generous financial support from the Saudi monarchy; its Constituent Council has thus been convened with exacting regularity (although general conferences have not). The luminaries gathered on the League's Council -- presided over by a Saudi national according to its constitution -- are of unrivalled stature. Among those who have served on the League's Council



have been Aḥamdu Bello, Abū'l-ʿAlā al-Mawdūdī, Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, Muḥammad Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī, ʿAllāl al-Fāṣī, Saʿīd Ramadān, Inʿāmullāh Khān, and many others. They represented and continue to represent the select elite of contemporary Muslim activists.<sup>33</sup>

Academy of Islamic Research (Cairo). The Egyptian government, engaged in a bitter feud throughout most of the 1960s with the Saudi monarchy, felt compelled to respond to the creation of such an influential body under Riyadh's auspices. As part of the state-directed reorganization of al-Azhar University, an Academy for Islamic Research (Majmaʿ al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyya) was established by law as "the highest body for research and study of Islamic cultures", authorized "to pass judgment on new theological or social problems connected with the Islamic faith."<sup>34</sup> Although created in 1961, the Academy's first conference (1964) was convened only in response to the creation of the World Muslim League.

The Academy's conference -- often simply called the 'Conference of ʿUlamāʾ' -- is in fact comprised of two sessions: a two week gathering that includes invited ʿulamāʾ from throughout the Islamic world, followed by a session restricted to Academy members -- who are overwhelmingly of Egyptian nationality and affiliated with the University. But both sessions are under the authority of al-Azhar, and the conference is led by the rector of that institution. Under Azharite control, the conference's deliberations have echoed the policies of the regime. Under Nāṣir, the Academy provided Islamic justifications for socialist redistribution of wealth and issued vitriolic papers against Israel.<sup>35</sup> Under Anwar as-Sādāt, both of these motifs have yielded to more fundamentalist concerns, such as the reinstitution of ḥudūd punishments. The transition may have been difficult, for the most recent session (October 1977) followed a hiatus of several years.

International Islamic Organization (Jakarta). The Academy, which until Sādāt's ascent espoused the highly politicized and anti-fundamentalist line of <sup>C</sup>Abd an-Nāṣir's 'Islamic socialism', found a parallel in the Jakarta-based Afro-Asian Islamic Organization, established at a Bandung conference in 1965. The Organization was initially no more than an appendage to the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, promoted an identical anti-imperialist and socialist platform, and was once the only Islamic conference organization to which the People's Republic of China officially belonged. But when Suharto replaced Sukarno, the tone quite naturally underwent a radical change: Communism was denounced by resolution as "unjust and unlawful", and the 'Afro-Asian' designation of the conference, with all of its secular and left-leaning associations, was dropped. The forum today is known as the International Islamic Organization, and the name change is perhaps the best evidence of the Organization's tendency to bend before the changing winds of political fortune. Like Cairo's Academy, the International Islamic Organization has gone from radical reformism to more conventional fundamentalism as sponsoring regime shifted from left to right.

General Islamic Conference of Jerusalem/Islamic Congress for Palestine Affairs (Amman). State initiative, state funding, and state guidance: these were shared, in varying degrees, by all of the four most important organizations cited above. How more remarkable, then, was the checkered history of one last organization, the General Islamic Conference of Jerusalem (al-Mu'tamar al-Islāmī al-<sup>C</sup>Āmm). Created through an independent initiative of the Muslim Brethren in 1953, the organization, under the guidance of Sa<sup>C</sup>īd Ramaḍān, remained relatively free of state finance and guidance for years. At its first conference in Jerusalem were men of wide renown, among them Sayyid Qutb, Nawāb Safavi of the Fidā'īyān-i Islām, Abū'l-Qāsim Āyat Allāh al-Qāshānī, <sup>C</sup>Allāl al-Fāṣī, and Muḥammad Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī. Interestingly, many of those who would later serve on the World Muslim League's

select Constituent Council discharged similar duties for the Jerusalem organization, and the proceedings reflected a fundamentalist disposition similar to that of the Saudi-supported League. Indeed, a convincing argument could be made that the League was the true continuum -- in both ideology and personnel -- of the Jerusalem organization.

For the rare independence of the Jerusalem conference itself was gradually eroded: after a time, the Jordanian government placed obstacles before the organization, and then endeavoured to exploit it on behalf of the monarchy.<sup>36</sup> The Jerusalem conference was rendered somewhat obsolete with the creation of the better financed Meccan-based League; today the organization, now in Amman, deals almost exclusively with the Palestine problem, and cooperates closely with the Jordanian Ministry of Awqāf.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two stages are discernable in the development of relations between these numerous forums: a period of often intense rivalry which persisted through the late 1960s, followed by a period of coordination and consolidation that is still in progress. The early disharmony was the result of divisions fomented by the spread of Nāṣirism; the later cooperation, a recent consequence of Saudi Arabia's ever-widening influence.

Because Nāṣir loathed the Ikhwān and distrusted Riyāḍ, al-Azhar's Academy took to the field against the Ikhwān-sponsored General Islamic Conference of Jerusalem, and Mecca's World Muslim League. Nāṣir's contempt for these last two organizations was quite manifest:

We must convene a conference of truly religious ulama, we must establish true centers of religious thought. We must



not bring together the brokers, the terrorists from the Muslim Brotherhood, the bribe takers and the shady dealers, I could mention some of the names of such characters, who meet at present in the so-called Islamic conference or League of the Islamic conference. However, all the people know them and I do not wish to mention any names. 37

Al-Ahrām once compared the Academy's conference in Egypt, held for no other reason "but to serve God and science", with the World Muslim League's gathering, allegedly bent upon exploiting religion for the political ends of reactionary, imperialist, and capitalist forces. 38 But Cairo waged more than verbal skirmishes. The Egyptian property of the League's Secretary-General was sequestered shortly before his appointment, while the Egyptian nationality of the Secretary-General of the Jerusalem-based conference (Sa<sup>C</sup>īd Ramaḍān) was revoked, his mother and sisters were once arrested, and he himself was sentenced in absentia to hard labour by an Egyptian court. In retribution, King Sa<sup>C</sup>ūd decried Nasir's regime through incisive allusions before the assembled League; 39 the League itself reprimanded Egypt for persecution of the Ikhwān, accused Cairo of having "killed the thinkers and ulema for only carrying out their duty," and admonished Egyptian officials to "fear God." 40

These mutual vilifications ended only after Nāṣir himself relented in his hostility towards the Saudis, following the June 1967 war. By that time, the World Muslim League had already begun the stage of consolidation by unifying several international Islamic organizations under the aegis of a coordinating committee. The League enjoyed the great advantage of adequate funding and sustained government commitment; other institutions were gradually drawn into its orbit. At an early 41 date, one finds that the League paid subsidies to other organizations; the League was then in a position to restrict the activities of these clients, reserving for itself a preeminent position. By agreement with the League, the jurisdiction of the World Muslim Congress of Karachi

was limited to cultural concerns, and the General Islamic Conference of Jerusalem was confined to Palestine affairs. The convening of conferences by either of these client organizations required prior consultation with the League.<sup>42</sup> An organization of Islamic conferences was instituted, to promote 'mutual consultation', but was presided over by the Secretary-General of the League, was headquartered in Mecca, and was funded by Riyāḍ. Egypt's organizations have of late conceded the role of leadership to the League,<sup>43</sup> and League representatives attended the Academy sessions in Cairo for the first time in October 1977, at last signifying a full reconciliation between the past antagonists.

Further expansion followed the integration of existing organizations. Over the past decade, the League has rapidly extended its activities to each continent, where regional Islamic conferences are convoked under its auspices, and has helped promote a host of gatherings in Saudi Arabia for leaders of Islamic associations, awqāf and mosque officials, Muslim educators, fuqahā', missionaries, and even scientists. As in so much of Saudi Arabia's planning, the latest wave of Islamic conferences has been characterized by redundancy and waste; yet one cannot conclude that beneath this flurry of activity, at least some enduring foundations have not been laid.

For in the wake of Saudi Arabia's rapprochement with Egypt and the heightened reliance of many Islamic governments upon Saudi aid, the League has been able to consolidate and centralize the activities of once mutually antagonistic organizations. As a result, Saudi Arabia's strict brand of fundamentalism has become the common tone in the deliberations of all of the major conferences. On the whole, this process has appealed to concerned Muslims: both aspiration and logic have insisted that Islamic fraternity -- and conformity -- be promoted by one rather than by half a dozen bodies, for were Islamic organizations

themselves incapable of coordinating their endeavours, how much more implausible was the achievement of a wider Islamic consensus. But this consolidation is certainly the result of a concerted Saudi campaign, and is carefully attuned to Riyāḍ's policy objectives. Whether there exist independent forces which could sustain centralization without Saudi initiative and financial incentive is a speculative question best left to more oracular commentators.

But regardless of the relative vitality of motivating forces, their immediate implications are quite apparent: organized Islam increasingly resembles the centralized apparatus originally envisioned by the early enthusiasts of the conference idea. The impact of this coordination has not yet been felt throughout wider society. A more definitive assessment of activist Islamic solidarity will be possible only should truly concerted attempts be launched to advance an Islamic program for politics and society.

One must not understand this Islamic 'alternative' to be a defined blueprint for action, for there is in fact a considerable diversity of opinion among Muslims on many issues of Muslim concern. But one may readily identify a shared set of attitudes and beliefs -- increasingly fundamentalist with the passage of time -- that are articulated again and again in the deliberations of Culamā' and religious activists in Islamic conferences.

The assumption underlying these proceedings is familiar to every student of responses to Western ascendance in the Islamic East: Muslims have been diverted from the 'straight path' by the wholesale importation of foreign thought and alien values. The consequent social disintegration can only be reversed by a return to the pristine precepts of a revitalized Islam. Unity is a means to this end: Muslim solidarity will bring "security against malice and deviation and protection for the Islamic world against the infiltration of alien ideas, moral



degeneration and false doctrines which aim at destroying Muslim societies and at weakening their religious immunity to make them easy prey for ambitious imperialist powers." <sup>44</sup>

These objectives imply certain concrete steps. Muslim 'deviants' (such as the Qādyāniyya sect) must be countered; the media must be cleansed of "destructive and athiestic ideas, and moral deviations opposed to Islam to protect the upcoming generation from corruption, instability, and ruin"; <sup>45</sup> and laws banning gambling, drinking, adultery, prostitution, and usury must be enacted. <sup>46</sup> The greatest effort has been channelled toward the reinstitution of sharī<sup>c</sup>a punishments (ḥudūd) for certain offenses such as theft, adultery, and apostasy. A recent international conference on Islamic jurisprudence in Riyāḍ advocated the return to such punishments, to create a "healthy Islamic society, far removed from moral deviation", <sup>47</sup> giving sanction to a sentiment long expressed in widening circles, and worthy of separate study.

The implementation of these and other provisions is the test which organized Islam has set for itself. In the case of reinstituted ḥudūd punishments, the Islamic 'alternative' has met with notable success; but this remains only one aspect of the much wider effort to reform society in toto. Whether Islamic conferences, or indeed the much-heralded Islamic 'revival', can effect such a radical transformation must remain an open question.

## VI. In International Diplomacy

It is for the good of states that men should be deluded by religion.

-- Varro

An appraisal of Islamic conferences might well have ended here,

had not another resourceful application been found for the term mu'tamar islāmī. By the end of the 1960s, the leaders of a sufficient number of predominantly Muslim states concurred that the Islamic appeal was so persuasive that religion could no longer be left to the men of religion. Habib Bourguiba articulated this opinion quite candidly while advocating an Islamic summit conference:

We do not believe that an Islamic state can afford to refrain from taking part in such action, alleging that such action is none of its business...Islam is well-knit unity between the affairs of life and the hereafter. Those who are the guardians are responsible for both. We have the glorious examples in the behaviour of the Prophet -- may God's prayers and peace be upon him -- and the Caliphates...

Islam and looking after the affairs of Muslims are not the concern of men of religion alone. Islam is not a house of God separated from the state. 48

Bourguiba echoed the concern of an increasing number of dissatisfied Muslims who regarded the conventional Islamic conferences of ʿulamāʾ, activists, and notables as so many undisciplined platforms for long-winded oratory. A columnist for a Jordanian newspaper once complained that while Saudi radio required some thirty minutes to broadcast the text of the latest resolutions passed by the World Muslim League, the League delegates themselves were not in the position to enforce a single one of them. 49

The dilemma was familiar: the conventional conferences, in essence political creations, could not but pay homage to fundamentally political aspirations; but as non-governmental bodies (popular or shāʿbī was the usual designation), most of their decisions remained no more than pious admonitions. In order to eradicate the glaring discrepancy between word and deed, support rose for the establishment of an organization of Islamic states whose conferences

would serve as multilateral forums for the planning of collective Muslim action. This was to be the culmination of the movement for Islamic solidarity (tadamun) -- heir to the more ambitious nineteenth century notion of union (ittihad) -- founded upon cooperation between sovereign Islamic states.

Early initiatives. Once again, the first expressions of this idea probably reached back into nineteenth century pan-Islamic programs; as for concrete proposals, we have already seen how the Mecca conference of 1926 was originally envisaged as a gathering for Muslim rulers. But the first energetically pursued proposal was the work of a group of prominent Pakistani officials -- among them Chawdhri Khalīquzzamān and Zafrullāh Khan -- in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Their efforts culminated in a 1952 campaign to convene a conference of Islamic prime ministers. Behind the enterprise was the same Pakistani desire to coalesce Muslim support against India that had spawned the World Muslim Congress. But the initiative for an Islamic 'bloc' soon became identified with Pakistan's simultaneous quest for a viable pro-Western military alliance -- something of a precursor to the Baghdad Pact. Thus, while Fārūq had agreed to Egyptian participation, the regime of the Free Officers could not, precipitating a crisis in Pakistani-Egyptian relations and the failure of the Pakistani initiative.

The Islamic Congress. Nevertheless, when Nāṣir displaced Nājib, he too flirted briefly with the Islamic appeal, meeting with Saudi and Pakistani heads of state in Mecca at an Islamic 'conference' during the 1954 pilgrimage season. In a much-quoted passage of his Falsafat ath-Thawra,<sup>50</sup> Nāṣir dramatically relates how the idea for such a gathering of Muslim leaders struck him as he stood before the Holy Ka<sup>c</sup>ba on a previous visit to Mecca, and the Egyptian press attributed to him alone, the idea of transforming the hajj into a conference of Muslim leaders.<sup>51</sup> It is quite obvious



that there was not a shred of originality to this idea by Nāṣir's time, and in fact it was even voiced earlier within the revolutionary regime, by General Nājib. 52

Obscure as its inspiration may now appear, the conference did create a permanent Islamic Congress (al-Mu'tamar al-Islāmī) under the directorship of Anwar as-Sādāt, to promote a more inclusive gathering of Muslim leaders. Sādāt soon busied himself in preparations and junkets, but despite his efforts, subsequent conferences were never convened. As an increasingly anti-Western Egyptian regime split with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia over the Baghdad Pact, the Islamic Congress, headquartered in Cairo, became simply one more governmental organ and publishing house for the dissemination of Egyptian views in other countries. So insignificant were the operations of the Congress that Sādāt, installed as its secretary-general, was thought to have thus been reduced to a political cipher. 53

'Islamic Pact'. Despite the exacerbated divisions that afflicted the Islamic world, and particularly the Arabs, in the mid-1960s, a call for an Islamic summit was issued again by Saudi Arabia (late 1965), and was supported by the other so-called 'conservative' states of Iran, Jordan, Tunisia, and Somalia. Although advocates of the summit claimed that they were motivated only by the most honorable of intentions -- that of Islamic solidarity -- critics denounced the plan as a means to extend the Baghdad Pact under the guise of an 'Islamic pact', and dismissed it as a shallow attempt to counter the spread of revolutionary Nāṣirism beyond Egypt. The proposal led to a severe Egyptian-Saudi propaganda war, pursued in the press and on the airwaves, that monopolized much of Middle Eastern political discussion for over a year. 54

Given the deep divisions between Islamic states, the conference had no hope of being convened at that time. The initiative was

contested by two lines of arguments which gained widespread circulation. The first held that the summit was in fact the Baghdad Pact in disguise. "They have given to the Baghdad Pact an Arabic name", proclaimed Nāṣir, "in order to better camouflage the presence of Great Britain and the United States. They have put a turban on the new pact, and now they call it the Islamic pact, or congress, or bloc." <sup>55</sup> The popular Cairene slogan, ḥilf al-Islām, ḥilf al-istislām -- "Islamic alliance, alliance of capitulation" -- reduced this perspective to an easily memorized catechism,

The second argument advanced against the projected summit held that the leaders of states should be prevented from interference in religious affairs which were not their concern. Such an organization of Islamic states, said Algerian Foreign Minister 'Azīz Boutifliqa, was "incompatible with the conventional spirit of international relations in our contemporary world." <sup>56</sup> Nāṣir was more cutting:

That the conference should meet for the Shah of Iran to discuss religious affairs (is impossible). We all know that the Shah of Iran knows nothing about religions, that he suppresses men of religion in his own country and that he spends most of his time and holidays on vacation in Europe. The Shah of Iran cannot be allowed to insult Islam and tell us what kind of Islamic religion we must follow, because the Shah of Iran is not a religious man but a politician. Who sits next to him? Bourguiba. Bourguiba issued a fatwā abolishing the Ramaḍān fast and advocating peace with Israel. Bourguiba is an agent and deluded too. Shall we bring someone who is an agent and deluded and ask him to discuss religion? Impossible. <sup>57</sup>

Organization of the Islamic Conference. Under relentless criticism, Fayṣal's Saudi initiative faded from view in late 1966. But a striking reversal soon followed.

In September 1969, the first Islamic summit conference was

convened at Rabat, Morocco, with the participation of some of those countries which had been the most violent in their opposition to the Saudi initiative less than three years earlier, among them Egypt. The successful convocation of the Rabat summit revealed how thoroughly the Islamic world had been traumatized in so short a time. The June 1967 war brought Nāṣir's prestige to its lowest ebb; his policies had failed the test of battle, and the 'conservative' regimes were given a renewed lease on life. Indeed, the very principles underlying Arabism had been shaken. a wealth of literature began to appear, arguing that only a return to Islamic values could ensure that the latest humiliation would not be repeated.

For their part, the 'conservative' regimes, many still reliant upon religious legitimization, were less interested in a pro-Western alliance as the threat of Nāṣir's Egypt to their stability abated. Their initiative for an Islamic summit could no longer be portrayed as a 'pacte de Baghdad enturbanné'. And after the 1967 debacle, even the 'revolutionary' Arab governments were willing to ferret out the support of non-Arab Muslims for the struggle against Israel, even if it meant appealing to religious sentiment. Finally, it was agreed among the initiators that an Islamic summit conference would exclude all religious questions from its jurisdiction and would confine the deliberations to political crises faced by Muslims, particularly in Palestine. The destruction by arson of portions of al-Aqṣā mosque in Israeli-held Jerusalem served as the pretext for the convocation of the first summit.

Rabat's summit and the establishment of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (al-Munazzama li'l-Mu'tamar al-Islāmi) -- in effect, a league of Islamic states -- are well-documented and require no further narrative description.<sup>58</sup> The new organization had many of the attributes of a genuinely independent forum which had long eluded Muslims. An annual conference of Islamic foreign ministers



emerged from Rabat, guided by an autonomous secretariat under widely reputed leadership. The choice of Jidda in preference to Mecca as the organization's headquarters reflected the conference's diplomatic rather than religious character. Each member state enjoys equal standing; annual contributions are required of each member state to finance the organization's conferences and secretariat; geographic distribution is stipulated as a criterion for administrative appointments within the secretariat; and the organization receives diplomatic privileges and immunities within member states for its officials and those serving its specialized agencies. In all of these respects, the organization resembles conventional international forums such as the United Nations or regional organizations like the Arab League.

But fundamental departures from this norm persist. The organization does not allow open discussion of conflicts between member states: as an organization founded to promote Islamic solidarity, resolutions have only advanced positions on disputes of members with non-member (re: non-Muslim) states. On occasion, quarreling delegates have been reminded by their colleagues to leave their differences behind them attending a conference, and member states prefer to take disputes among themselves to the United Nations. To preserve this same facade of unity, decisions are reached secretly and by consensus rather than through open voting. While twentieth century international organization has been characterized by the movement from unanimous accord to majority rule, Islamic conferences have retained the former and thus affirmed the primacy of sovereign rights over collective will.

Equally distinctive are many of the problems of membership qualifications, since the criteria which constitute the Muslim character of a state are nebulous. Over time, a principle was informally adopted that admitted only states with Muslim majorities (thus

excluding India and the Philippines which both sought membership). Still, there are West African member states that do not even approach fulfillment of this provision; politics, rather than abstract principle, appear to set the limits of the membership roster.

Yet another root of inequity has involved the finances of the organization's principal agencies: the International Islamic News Agency (IINA), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Islamic Broadcasting Organization of Islamic States, the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF), and the Jerusalem Fund. Fiscal support for these banks, funds, and associations has come from a select group of oil-producing countries that have installed their representatives in management positions within each agency. Most of the agencies are not directly accountable to the annual conference of foreign ministers, and there appears to be no viable apparatus to ensure the equal participation of poorer countries in policy decisions concerning the allocation of funds.

On yet another count, it seems that the present policy of holding the annual conference of foreign ministers in different countries rather than at the organization's Jidda headquarters, has failed. Originally designed to evoke a sense of involvement among all member states, the policy has caused considerable discord. Most recently, Egypt, Sudan, and Iran refused to participate in the May 1977 conference, not because of any discouragement with the performance of the organization but because the gathering was held in hostile Libya. There is little appreciation for the neutrality of venue among member states; and the choice of Dakar as the site of the April 1978 conference was most probably intended to physically remove the gathering as far from inter-Arab rivalries as was possible.

But perhaps most ominously, there have been complaints that the governments have been no more effective in realizing their resolutions than the Culamā' before them. Colonel Mu<sup>C</sup>ammar al-Qadhdhāfī was once bluntly candid on this point, reading to other heads of state at the second Islamic summit at Lahore, a lengthy list of past resolutions that were simply never implemented.<sup>59</sup> If one assumes that the organization was indeed created to fully bridge the gap between word and deed, there is no little room for discontent. There is then some chance that the Organization of the Islamic Conference, not unlike its predecessors of the 1920s and 1930s, will fall victim to flights of great expectations. There are serious Muslims who have gone so far as to advocate a federal union of Muslim states actually governed by an Islamic conference organization;<sup>60</sup> they are unperturbed by the difficulties encountered by similar efforts in Europe, and even among smaller blocs of states within the Islamic world (as in the case of the Arab League).

The present conference machinery was not motivated or structured out of consideration for such visionary ideals. The organization was founded by sovereign states, each of which regards it as a forum for pursuit of the interests of sovereign states. Indeed, the principle that underlies Islamic solidarity -- unlike traditional pan-Islamism -- is recognition of a legitimate multiplicity of sovereignties. From this perspective, a modicum of success has been achieved. There have been some notable reconciliations between Muslim countries formerly at odds, an interesting exchange of views, and a small degree of international cooperation within the secretariat and the agencies. But should that modest perspective be lost in rekindled demands for some form of neo pan-Islamic union or integration, Islamic conferences quite obviously are in no better position to rise to the occasion than their component parts.



## VII. An Appraisal

Change has been the central theme of this essay: Islamic conferences passed from abstract concept to articulated proposal, and from proposal to reality. They crossed the barrier between sporadic and regular assembly, between narrow concerns and inclusive programs, between fragmentation and integration. Most recently, they partially passed from the hands of men of religion and activists: the format of the Islamic conference now equally gathers politicians and diplomats.

But the most critical dilemma facing world Islamic conferences has not changed. In many international forums, there is a profound tension between the theatrical and the practical; each assembly must strike an acceptable balance between the two. Islamic conferences have not yet found that equilibrium. The proceedings often play to the press gallery, and the conference hall is still very much the stage, less frequently the workshop. In failing to yet strike that balance, Islamic conferences are in prestigious company. Like so many other international forums and agencies spawned by the 'organizational revolution', Islamic conferences possess an unrealized potential for influence -- whether in the conduct of world affairs or the advancement of Islam. The conclusion of an academic colloquium, that Islam did not count for much in international affairs,<sup>61</sup> has only been partially refuted. A future realization of that potential most certainly hinges upon whether world Islamic conferences prove a worthy vessel for an ever-present Islamic faith, sentiment, and commitment, whose traditional vessels have been so thoroughly shattered.

Abbreviations

BBC/ME	<u>British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts/ The Middle East</u>
FBIS/ME	<u>Foreign Broadcast Information Service/The Middle East</u>
OM	<u>Oriente Moderno</u> (Rome)

Notes

1. Nikki R. Keddie, ed., Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Institutions Since 1500 (Berkeley: University of California, 1972); making allowances for points made by the editor, p. 6. This holds scarcely less true of the important volume edited by Gabriel Baer, The 'Ulamā' and Problems of Religion in the Muslim World (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971) [in Hebrew].
2. The most perceptive of these is Bernard Lewis, "The Return of Islam," Commentary (New York), LXI, 1 (Jan. 1976), 39-49.
3. "Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy: A Symposium," Commentary (New York), LXV, 4 (April 1978), p. 37.
4. This study does not include limited regional or national Islamic conferences which possess a dynamic of their own, quite distinct from that of international or global forums. These important small-scale gatherings preceded world Islamic conferences by several decades, and particularly flourished in India and Russia.

Examples of these early conferences can be found in Edward Allworth, ed., Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule (New York: Columbia University, 1967), pp. 186-7, 217-22; and a recent instance is described by Bassem el-Jisr, "Le premier congrès islamique libanais," Travaux et jours (Beirut), 53 (Oct.-Dec. 1974), 13-29.

5. Amīr <sup>C</sup>Alī even regarded such councils as evidence of a 'fundamental defect' in Christianity:

One thing is certain, that had a longer career been vouchsafed to him [Jesus], he would have placed his teachings on a more systematic basis. This fundamental defect in Christianity has been, in fact, the real cause of the assembling of councils and convocations for the establishment of articles and dogmas, which snap asunder at every slight tension of reason and free thought. The work of Jesus was left unfinished. It was reserved for another Teacher [Muhammad] to systematize the laws of morality.

From Ameer Ali, The Spirit of Islām (London: Christopher's, 1922), p. 173.

6. Ignaz Goldziher, Vorlesungen uber den Islam (2nd ed.; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925), pp. 183-4; trans. by Bernard Lewis, Islam in History (London: Alcové, 1973), p. 231. Ijma<sup>C</sup> is not the only analogy to have been drawn with the conciliar idea: both the hajj and the Qur'ānic injunctions presecriving consulation (shūrā) are often cited. These comparisons serve their purpose little better than ijma<sup>C</sup>. The hajj was traditionally regarded (until this century) as a personal religious obligation, not in any sense comparable to a forum for collective action. The hajj later provided a potential opportunity which was seized upon for the convening of those modern conferences



held in Mecca; but the pilgrimage traditions themselves made no contribution to the questions of the authority of an assembly the selection of participants, or mode of operation. The vague prescriptions concerning shūrā (such as that in the Qur'ān, 42: 38) might have done so, had they not always remained vague prescriptions. They similarly offered no useful model for functioning consultation, although they are frequently cited by modern Muslims as justifications for the mu'tamarāt of contemporary Islam. Cf. for example Muḥammad Abū Zahra, Al-Wahda al-Islāmiyya (Beirut: al-Rā'id al-<sup>C</sup>Arabi, 1971), pp. 239-271.

7. Cited by Joseph Schacht, The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence (London: Oxford University, 1950), p. 84.
8. Sa<sup>C</sup>īd al-Karmī, Grand Qāḍī of Transjordan, quoted by Henri Lammens, Islam: Beliefs and Institutions (trans. from Fr. by Sir E. Denison Ross; London: Methuen, 1924), p. 201. Lammens presented the remark outside of its proper political context, for which one may consult QM, IV (1924), pp. 294-5.
9. E.g. Al-Ahrām (Cairo), 21 Aug. 1954; al-Bilād (Jidda), 19 April 1965.
10. Qur'ān, 3:103.
11. The variety of the pan-Islamic impact is conveyed in the three following articles: Edmund Burke, III, "Pan-Islam and Moroccan Resistance to French Colonial Penetration, 1900-1912," Journal of African History (London), XIII, 1 (1972), 97-118; Antony Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia," Journal of Asian Studies (Ann Arbor, Mich.) XXVI, 2 (Feb. 1967), 267-83; and J.C. Froelich, "Panislamisme en Afrique noire," Études (Paris), Nov. 1969, 514-26. The two most important general

articles in English on the pan-Islamic movement are Dwight E. Lee, "The Origins of Pan-Islamism," American Historical Review (Lancaster, Pa.), XLVII, 2 (Jan. 1942), 278-87; and Nikki R. Keddie, "Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism," Journal of Modern History (Chicago), XLI (March 1969), 17-28.

12. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, al-Khilāfa aw al-imāma al-ʿuzmā (Cairo 1341/1922-37), p. 102.
13. H. A.R. Gibb, Whither Islam? (London: Gollancz, 1932), pp. 357-8.
14. A somewhat unsatisfactory attempt to trace the idea's origins is that of Richard Hartman, "Zum Gedanken des 'Kongresses' in den Reformbestrebungen des islamischen Orients," Die Welt des Islams (Leipzig), XXIII (1941), 122-32. The pre-modern precedents cited are somewhat fanciful; otherwise, the article serves as a useful introduction.
15. Al-Manār, X, 9 (Nov. 1907), pp. 673-5.
16. Al-Manār, III, 7 (April 1900), p. 154.
17. Al-Manār, III, 7 (April 1900), pp. 151-7; III, 8 (May 1900), p. 192.
18. Al-Manār, I, 39 (Sha<sup>c</sup>bān 1315/c. Dec. 1897), pp. 764-71.
19. Published under the pseudonym Sayyid al-Furātī, Sijill mudhākārāt jam<sup>c</sup>ʿīat umm al-qurā (Port Said: 1312 [1894-5]), a rare copy of which may be found in the Princeton University Library. The work became better known through its serialization in al-Manār. Cf. Sylvia Haim, "Blunt and al-Kawākibī,"

- OM (Rome), XXXV (1955), pp. 132-43; Elie Kedourie, Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies (London: Cass, 1974), pp. 109-11; and Norbert Tapiero, Les Idées réformatrices d'al-Kawākibī (Paris: Les éditions arabes, 1956), particularly pp. 6-11, 82-102.
20. Thomas Kuttner, "Russian Jadidism and the Islamic World. Ismail Gasprinskii in Cairo -- 1908. A Call to the Arabs for the Rejuvenation of the Islamic World," Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique (Paris), XVI, 3-4 (July-Dec. 1975), 413-20. One might add to his bibliography, which includes all the relevant accounts of the 'Universal Islamic Congress' that appeared in al-Manār and Revue du monde musulman, the article "Muslimū Rūsīya wa'l-mu'tamar al-islāmī," Al-Muqtataf (Cairo) XXXII, 2 (Dec. 1907), 968-81.
21. Kedourie, Arabic Political Memoirs, pp. 110-1.
22. Al-Manār, X, 9 (Nov. 1907, p. 682; XIV, 10 (Oct. 1911), p. 737; Kuttner, "Gasprinskii in Cairo," pp. 415, 418.
23. OM, IV (1924), p. 177.
24. OM, I (1921), p. 158; II (1922), p. 291.
25. Described in OM, IV (1924), pp. 600-2. He also instituted a majlis shūrā al-khalīfa, where thirty-one members of eleven nationalisties served. Cf. OM, IV (1924), pp. 295-6.
26. OM, II (1922), pp. 291-2.



27. Each of these conferences is the subject of a vast corpus of literature, of which only some representative samples may be cited. On the 1926 conferences in Cairo and Mecca: a basic source is that of A. Sekaly, "Les deux Congrès généraux de 1926: Le Congrès du Khilafat (Le Cairo, 13-19 mai 1926) et le Congrès du Monde Musulman (La Mecque, 7 juin-5 juillet 1926)," Revue du monde musulman (Paris), LXIV (1926). The entire issue is devoted to an account of the conferences' proceedings, drawn primarily from the Arabic press. OM presented the finest summaries of the gatherings; for Cairo, cf. in particular OM, V (1925), pp. 91-3 and VI (1926), pp. 256-73. For Mecca, see OM, V (1925), pp. 667-9 and VI (1926), pp. 285-7, 309-17, 353-62. A. J. Toynbee relied principally upon Sekaly and OM for his two accounts, "The Caliphate Congress held in Cairo on 13th-15th May, 1926" and "The Islamic Congress at Mecca (1926)," in Survey of International Affairs, 1925 (London: Oxford University, 1927), I, 81-90, 308-19. Another equally derivative account is that of F. Taillardat, "Les Congrès interislamiques de 1926," L'Asie française (Paris), XXVII, 246 (Jan. 1927), pp. 9-13 and XXVII, 247 (Feb. 1927), pp. 54-60.

On the Jerusalem conference, one again has informed press summaries in OM, XI (1931), pp. 526-30, 578-81, and XII (1932), pp. 24-43, 74-5, 271-2, 331-2, and 425-7. Consult the index for activities in subsequent years. See also H.A.R. Gibb, "The Islamic Congress in Jerusalem in December 1931," Survey of International Affairs, 1934 (London: Oxford University, 1935), pp. 99-110; A. Nielsen, "The International Islamic Conference at Jerusalem," Moslem World (Hartford, Conn.), XXII (1932), pp. 340-54; and the early chapters of Eugene Jung, Le Réveil de l'Islam et des Arabes (Paris: chez l'auteur, 1933). Egypt's role in all three conferences is described by Elie Kedourie, "Egypt and the Caliphate, 1915-1952," in his The Chatham House

Version (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), pp. 177-207.

28. Inis L. Claude, Jr., Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization (4th ed.; New York Random House, 1971), pp. 8-17.
29. That under the guidance of Shakīb Arslān in Geneva, Switzerland; cf. OM, XV (1935), pp. 501-4, 563-7.
30. Al-<sup>C</sup>Ahd al-Jadīd (Baghdad), 29 May 1962; Iraq Times, 30 May 1962.
31. Discussed in A.B.A. Haleem, "The Baghdad World Muslim Conference," Pakistan Horizon (Karachi), XV, 3 (1962), 169-76. Another useful source concerning the Congress is its weekly newsletter, The Muslim World (Karachi).
32. OM, XLII (1962), p. 613.
33. By far the best available sources on the League's activities are its own publications: the monthly Maj. Rābiṭat al-<sup>C</sup>Ālam al-Islāmī, its English-language companion Journal, and the weekly Akhbār al-<sup>C</sup>Ālam al-Islāmī (all at Mecca).
34. Cairo MENA, 7 March 1964--FBIS/ME/b6 (9 March 1964).
35. In one case, pro-Israeli interests actually reproduced parts of the official English translation of the proceedings of the Academy, as an example of the extreme to which the 'theologization' of the Middle East conflict had reached. See D.F. Green, ed. Arab Theologians on Jews and Israel (Geneva: L'Avenir, 1971). Unlike other organizations, the Academy publishes both Arabic and English versions of its deliberations, which are also well-

reported in Maj. al-Azhar (Cairo).

36. As was the case by the time an article was written on the organization by Simon Jargy, "A propos du Congrès islamique de Jérusalem," Orient (Paris), 13 (1960), 19-29, 225-30.
37. Radio Cairo and Voice of the Arabs, 22 July 1966--BBC/ME/2221/A14 (25 July 1966).
38. Radio Cairo press review, 17 March 1966--BBC/ME/2116/A2 (19 March 1966).
39. OM, XLII (1962), p. 401.
40. Al-Bilād, 27 March 1966; Radio Jidda, 20 Nov. 1966--BBC/ME/2325/A3 (24 Nov. 1966).
41. Al-Madīna (Madina), 24 Nov. 1964; al-Bilād, 6 Nov. 1967.
42. Al-Bilād, 20 April 1965.
43. A process begun by their participation in the coordinating committee. Cf. al-Bilād, 28 Oct. 1968, 20 Nov. 1969, 19 Oct. 1969.
44. World Muslim League statement, Radio Jidda, 22 March 1966--BBC/ME/2120/A17 (24 March 1966).
45. World Muslim League statement, al-Bilād, 20 Nov. 1968.
46. World Muslim Congress resolution, OM, XLII (1962), p. 401; Radio Mogadishu, 5 Jan. 1965--BBC/ME/1752/B1 (7 Jan. 1965).



47. ʿUkāz, 31 Oct. 1976.
48. Radio Tunis, 18 Sept. 1966--BBC/ME/2269/A4 (20 Sept. 1966).
49. Falaṣṭīn, 23 May 1962.
50. Gamal Abdel Nasser, The Philosophy of the Revolution (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 67-8.
51. Al-Ahrām, 14-15 August, 1954.
52. After his return from a pilgrimage; cf. al-Ahrām, 28-29 August, 1953. It was only a short time later, in Nov. 1953, that Nāṣir himself arrived in Saudi Arabia (al-Ahrām, 10-13 Nov. 1953) at which time the idea of an Islamic conference, according to his Philosophy, suddenly struck him.
53. Cf. a brief account of this organization, entitled "Le Congrès islamique," Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales du Caire (Cairo), III (1956), 471-8.
54. For this reason, the controversy received considerable outside attention. Cf. Marcel Colombe's two collections of relevant speeches and press excerpts, which appeared as "Alliance islamique et golfe persique," Orient (Paris), 37 (1966), 175-237, and "'Alliance islamique' et fronte imperialiste a travers les textes," Orient (Paris), 38 (1966), 113-211; the two articles by Rodolfo Gil Benumeya, "El pacto islámico y la Liga arabe ante los problemas del golfo pérsico," Revista de Política Internacional (Madrid), 84 (March-April, 1966) 95-103, and "Fracaso del pacto islámico y nueva estructunacion del proximo oriente," Revista de Política Internacional (Madrid), 86 (July-Aug. 1966), 75-82; Francis

Hours, "Le 'pacte islamique': Apparences et réalités," Travaux et jours (Beirut), 18 (Jan.-March 1966), 83-91; and Pierre Rondot; s two articles, "Le duel Nasser-Faysal," Revue militaire générale (Paris), 1967, 7 (July), 227-36, and "Le 'pacte', élément nouveau de la mythologie politique de l'Arabisme," L'Afrique et l'Asie (Paris), 73 (1966), 14-23. For a very inclusive collection of documents concerning this controversy, mingled with partisan interpretation, see Salāh ad-Dīn al-Munajjid, at-Tadāmūn al-mārksī wa't-tadāmūn al-islāmī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1967).

55. Cf. Maurice Flory, "Les conférences islamiques," Annuaire français de droit international (Paris), XVI (1970), 233-43; concerning the follow-up at Jidda, cf. Pierre Rondot, "La conférence de Djeddah et le rôle politique de l'Islam," Revue de défense nationale (Paris), XXVI (June 1970), 916-23. The second Islamic summit at Lahore (1974) is described by Alfonso Sterpellone, "Panislamismo a Lahore," Affari Esteri (Rome), VI, 22 (April 1974), 101-19; Mehruunnisa Ali, "The Second Islamic Summit Conference, 1974," Pakistan Horizon (Karachi), XXVII, 1 (1974), 29-49; and Reyazul Hasan, "The Islamic Summit Conference," Iqbal Review (Iqbal Academy, Karachi), XV, 1 (April 1974), 43-64. For a description of conferences of foreign minisers, see Joseph P. O'Kane, "Trois manifestations islamiques," Traveaux et jours, 47 (April-June 1973), 113-29; S. Korkud, "Istanbul Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers," Foreign Policy (Ankara), V, 4 (1976), 18-22; and Giacomo E. Carretto, "La Conferenza Islamica e la Turchia," OM (Romes), LVI (1976), 105-16.

59. Tripoli Radio, 22 Feb. 1974--FBIS/ME/Q13 (25 Feb. 1974).

<sup>c</sup>Ammār, 1971), p. 60.

61. H. J. Proctor, ed. Islam and International Affairs (New York: Praeger, 1965), see editor's introductory remarks.



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H = Hebrew  
E = English